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Ministry of Attorney General
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REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH NOW IN PLACE

VICTORIA – A year after the Hughes review of British Columbia's child welfare system, the doors will open at the new office of the representative for children and youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

"Bringing into force the substantive provisions in the Representative for Children and Youth Act demonstrates this government's commitment to act on the valuable advice provided by Mr. Hughes to improve the lives of children and youth in this province," Children and Family Development Minister Tom Christensen said in making the announcement on behalf of Attorney General Wally Oppal.

With proclamation of this act, government has also completed implementation of the legislative recommendations in the Hughes review and formally wound up the office for children and youth.

Effective April 1, Turpel-Lafond will assume responsibility for advocating for children receiving services from child welfare agencies and for monitoring services provided by those agencies to children and youth in B.C. Other regulations are expected in the months ahead to bring into force legislation governing the representative's authority to review critical injuries and deaths.

"I am pleased that matters moved quickly to permit the office to begin functioning," said Turpel-Lafond. "The co-operation and consensus all political parties have shown in supporting this proclamation are important because they speak to the high value placed on their commitment to improving the lives of children in care in British Columbia."

The office of the representative arose from recommendations in the April 2006 BC Children and Youth Review by former justice Ted Hughes. The representative is an independent officer of the legislature, reporting to the Legislative Assembly and its Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

Turpel-Lafond, formerly an administrative judge with the Saskatchewan Provincial Court, was unanimously appointed last November by an all-party committee of the legislature. She served as acting child and youth officer from Jan. 1 to March 31 while managing the transition of that office to the representative for children and youth.

Turpel-Lafond earned a bachelor of arts degree from Carleton University, a law degree from Osgoode Hall, a master's degree in international law from the University of Cambridge and a doctorate of law from Harvard.

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